

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 017449  
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AS-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 PRS-01 H-02  
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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:EOJONES:RGH  
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN  
S/PRS - MR. BROWN (INFO)  
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)  
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW  
NEA - MS. GRIFFIN  
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER  
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH  
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY  
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

-----261706Z 053894 /43

O 261627Z JAN 77  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE  
USCINCEUR  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY SANA  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
USMISSION SINAI  
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN  
USMISSION GENEVA  
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
USMISSION NATO  
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY DOHA  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - JANUARY 25

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS  
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR  
JANUARY 25, 1977:

Q. THE SECRETARY HAS ADDED LEBANON TO THE USUAL ROUND OF  
COUNTRIES THAT ARE VISITED BY SECRETARIES OF STATE IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST. CAN YOU GIVE US ANY GUIDANCE WHY  
LEBANON--OR DO YOU HAVE ANY GUIDANCE WHY LEBANON WAS  
INCLUDED?

A. ONLY VERY GENERAL COMMENT--THAT, AS THE WHITE HOUSE  
NOTED, THE PRESIDENT WANTS TO HAVE A FIRST-HAND UNDER-  
STANDING OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE VIEWS  
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OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN LEADERS. I THINK IT IS QUITE  
OBVIOUS THAT LEBANON IS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE ENTIRE  
MIDDLE EAST EQUATION, AND IN THAT SENSE I SUPPOSE THAT  
STOPPING IN BEIRUT IS A RATHER LOGICAL MOVE; BUT  
SPECIFICALLY, HOWEVER, I CANNOT GIVE YOU ANY FURTHER  
JUSTIFICATION FOR IT.

Q. WELL, YOU KNOW, THERE HAVE BEEN CALLS, APPEALS,

DEMANDS--WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL THEM--FROM THE ARAB  
SIDE THAT LEBANON BE REPRESENTED AT ANY PEACE CONFERENCE--  
FOR INSTANCE, AT ANY NEGOTIATIONS. DOES THE VISIT TO  
LEBANON SUGGEST THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT AGREES WITH THAT  
IDEA?

A. NO. I DO NOT THINK IT SHOULD BE TAKEN AS A SUGGESTION  
THAT WE AGREE OR DISAGREE. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE  
SECRETARY TO GET A FIRST-HAND APPRAISAL OF THE SITUATION  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND THEN TO REPORT BACK TO THE PRESIDENT

SO THAT WE CAN HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHICH WAY TO MOVE. I THINK THAT STOPPING IN LEBANON IS REASONABLE IN THE CONTEXT OF A FACT-FINDING, INFORMATION-GATHERING TRIP ON THE PART OF THE NEW SECRETARY.

Q. I WILL ASK THE QUESTION--BEIRUT IS WHERE THE PLO HAS ITS MAIN HEADQUARTERS. IS THERE ANY INTENTION TO TALK TO THE PALESTINIAN LEADERS?

A. NO INDICATION WHATSOEVER OF ANY INTENTION TO TALK TO THE PALESTINIAN LEADERS IN BEIRUT.

Q. IS HE GOING TO TAKE PRESS PEOPLE ALONG?

Q. I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU--I WAS NOT GOING TO JUMP THAT FAST AS THE MORNING NEWSPAPER (LAUGHTER), BUT I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU WHO HE WOULD SEE IN LEBANON. I SUPPOSE HE UNCLASSIFIED

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WOULD SEE WHOEVER RUNS LEBANON. I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD TELL US WHO THAT IS.

A. LEBANON HAS A PRESIDENT, AS YOU KNOW, AND A PRIME MINISTER AND A DULY CONSTITUTED GOVERNMENT. HE WOULD DEAL WITH THE APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON.

Q. IS HE GOING TO LEBANON AS PART OF THE OVERALL EFFORT TO REACH A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT OR IS HE GOING TO LEBANON PRIMARILY TO BOOST SARKIS AND TO PERHAPS TALK ABOUT THE LEBANESE HOPE FOR AMERICAN AID?

A. HE IS GOING TO LEBANON TO OBTAIN A FIRST-HAND VIEW OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE MIDDLE EAST, LEBANON BEING AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROBLEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND REPORT BACK TO PRESIDENT CARTER SO THAT THE PRESIDENT MAY BE BETTER INFORMED ON WHERE WE GO NEXT WITH REGARD TO THAT GENERAL AREA. THERE IS CERTAINLY NO WAY TO MAKE ANY PRIORITY OF COUNTRIES TO BE VISITED. THIS IS PART OF THE WHOLE SCHEME OF THE MIDDLE EAST FACT-FINDING.

Q. WHY DOESN'T HE GO TO IRAQ? THAT'S IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CRUCIAL.

A. THIS IS A BRIEF TRIP, AND THESE ARE THE COUNTRIES THAT HE HAS DECIDED TO VISIT.

Q. WILL HE TAKE NEWS PEOPLE ALONG?

A. I SUSPECT SO.

Q. DO I UNDERSTAND RIGHT THAT THE TRIP WILL RUN FROM THE 14TH TO THE 21ST?

A. YES. THAT IS MY UNDERSTANDING.

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Q. DO I UNDERSTAND THAT HE'LL VISIT EACH COUNTRY ONCE, OR IS THERE SOME SHUTTLING?

A. I HAVE NO FURTHER DETAILS ON THE EXACT ITINERARY. I THINK THAT WILL BE FORTHCOMING IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE. THE COUNTRIES LISTED ARE ISRAEL, EGYPT, LEBANON, JORDAN, SYRIA AND SAUDI ARABIA.

Q. THE SECRETARY THEN WOULD BE VISITING ISRAEL AT A TIME WITHIN A WEEK PRIOR TO A MAJOR POLITICAL EVENT IN ISRAELI POLITICS. ONE, WAS ANY THOUGHT GIVEN TO THE INTERPRETATION THAT THIS WOULD BE REGARDED AS POSSIBLE AMERICAN INTRUSION IN ISRAELI POLITICS? -- BECAUSE, CLEARLY, THE SECRETARY WILL BE DEALING WITH THE CURRENT PRIME MINISTER WHO'S RUNNING FOR OFFICE. AND, SECONDLY, WAS THE VISIT TO ISRAEL IN FACT RESCHEDULED SO THAT IS NOW COMES BEFORE THE 22ND?

A. ON YOUR SECOND QUESTION I HAVE NO IDEA ABOUT SCHEDULING OR RESCHEDULING OF THE PRECISE DATES. ON YOUR FIRST QUESTION, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION TO AFFECT IN ANY WAY THE INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF ISRAEL; AND I AM SURE THAT THIS WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN LAYING ON THE TRIP AT THIS TIME. I REPEAT THAT THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO INTENT TO DO THAT.

Q. AND YET IN THE PRESIDENT'S INTERVIEW WITH THE TWO WIRE SERVICES--WHICH WAS ONLY A DAY OR TWO AGO--UNLESS HE MISSPOKE, HE SAID MR. VANCE WOULD BE GOING TO THE MIDDLE EAST IN MARCH--WHICH, SORT OF, IS TO THE POINT.

A. HE DIDN'T SAY THAT.

Q. THAT'S THE WAY IT APPEARED.

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A. NO. IT WAS NOT IN THE TRANSCRIPT AT ALL.

Q. YOU KNOW, I READ IT.

A. YES. HE DISCUSSED A NUMBER OF TRIPS AND A NUMBER OF DATES.

IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE ON THE MIDDLE EAST TRIP?

Q. CAN WE GO BACK TO LEBANON? ARE YOU AS CONCERNED AS ISRAEL APPEARS TO BE AT THE ENTRY OF A PEACEKEEPING REGIMENT--OF THE PEACEKEEPING FORCE INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON, WHICH HAS BEEN OUT OF BOUNDS TO THEM UP TO NOW?

A. I SAW THE PRESS REPORT ON IT. I DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT AT ALL.

Q. ONE MORE QUESTION ON LEBANON. DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHETHER THE SECRETARY WILL BE SPENDING OVERNIGHT IN LEBANON OR IS IT JUST A STOP THERE TO TALK AND THEN LEAVE? I MEAN THERE HAS BEEN GREAT CONCERN IN THE PAST OVER THE SECURITY SITUATION.

A. I DO NOT KNOW. THE EXACT ITINERARY WE DO NOT HAVE AS YET.

Q. DO YOU KNOW THE ORDER?

A. THE ONLY ORDER I HAVE IS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT, WHICH IS AS I HAVE GIVEN THEM TO YOU. AS I SAY, I THINK WE BETTER HOLD OFF ON ANY MORE QUESTIONS ON THE EXACT ITINERARY UNTIL WE GET THE FIRM WORD.

Q. DO WE HAVE A FUNCTIONING AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT? I JUST DON'T REMEMBER.

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A. WE HAVE A CHARGE AT THE MOMENT--GEORGE LANE.

Q. HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN IN THAT STATUS, DO YOU KNOW? I MEAN NOT HAVING AN AMBASSADOR THERE.

A. IT HAS BEEN SINCE THE TEMPORARY AMBASSADOR--I BELIEVE TALCOTT SEELYE--WAS THERE, AND HE LEFT AND THEN GEORGE LANE CAME IN SHORTLY THEREAFTER. SO IT HAS BEEN,

IF I AM NOT MISTAKEN, IN AUGUST. I WILL CHECK ON THE PRECISE DATE, BUT IT HAS BEEN ABOUT SIX MONTHS.

Q. BUT WHILE YOU'RE CHECKING, COULD YOU TRY TO FIND OUT WHY WE HAVEN'T HAD AN AMBASSADOR THERE? BECAUSE HERE YOU COME TELLING US HOW LOGICAL IT IS THAT WE GET ALL THE INFORMATION WE CAN FROM LEBANON--AND YET WE HADN'T SEEN REASON TO HAVE AN AMBASSADOR ON THE POST SINCE LAST SUMMER--WHICH WOULD HAVE HELPED, I SUPPOSE, GET YOU MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN LEBANON. WHILE YOU'RE FACT-FINDING, I WONDER WHY YOU DIDN'T SEND AN AMBASSADOR TO BEIRUT?

A. I DO NOT THINK THAT NECESSARILY FOLLOWS. OUR CHARGE THERE IS AN EXTREMELY COMPETENT PERSON, AND I DO NOT THINK THE FACT THAT WE HAVE HAD A CHARGE IN BEIRUT IN ANY WAY DETRACTS FROM OUR ABILITY TO APPRAISE THE SITUATION AND TO MAKE JUDGMENTS ON IT.  
VANCE

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